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DE RUEHYD #0827/01 2721550
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 291550Z SEP 09
FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0310
INFO RUEHZO/AFRICAN UNION COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 YAOUNDE 000827

STATE FOR S/GPI
DEPT PASS TO USAID

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E.O. 12958: N/A
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TSPL, EINV, CM

SUBJECT: The Cameroonian Diaspora

REF: STATE 78535

- ¶1. Post offers the following in responses to reftel request:
- ¶A. There are several different diaspora groups scattered over the U.S., France, and other European countries. Some of the more significant groups in the U.S. include: the Progressive Initiative for Cameroon (PICAM), a civil society think-tank that works on seeking ideas for a better Cameroon; the All Cameroon Cultural And Development Fund (ACCDF), working to protect and promote Cameroonian culture from all regions; the Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC); and the Civil Society Platform for Democracy in Cameroon, Platform USA Branch. The ruling political party, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM), and the main opposition Social Democratic Front (SDF), also have branches in the U.S.
- ¶B. Cameroonians in the diaspora keep ties with their families by sending them remittances, participating in village development programs, and making direct contributions to educational institutions through book donations, for example.
- ¶C. The GRC has had minimal formal engagement with the diaspora in the humanitarian realm. Cameroon's new Ambassador to the United States, Joseph Charles Bienvenu Foe-Atangana, recently addressed the Cameroonian diaspora at a National Day reception in the following terms: "I call upon you to use your Embassy as a facilitating place for your American connections to converge in our strategy to drive investments to Cameroon."
- ¶D. Diaspora investment is difficult to track systematically, but many believe most of the best real estate in Cameroon is owned by members of the diaspora. Some have created small to medium sized businesses in Cameroon to take advantage of relatively cheap labor.
- ¶E. There is little or no diaspora involvement in the scientific, engineering, medical or educational institutions. Recently, a "telemedicine" center was created in the East Region, envisioning cheap, long distance consultations and diagnosis. In addition, medical exchange programs initiated by Cameroonians in the diaspora have recently brought health professionals to provide free medical care. Some members of the diaspora have founded small development NGOs in order to provide humanitarian assistance to their home communities.
- ¶F. The diaspora does not seem to be engaged in conflict resolution, other than exhorting the current regime to reform politically to avoid a repeat of the violence in 2008.
- ¶G. See E above.
- ¶H. Cameroonians in the diaspora exert some influence on internal politics. The major political parties have overseas arms that rally sympathizers among the diaspora and provide some financing. Diaspora groups are active in the realm of political commentary and expression. For example, in early August 2009, a Cameroonian journalist who lives in New York wrote an editorial in a prominent

independent daily newspaper in which he opines that terminating the presidential regime would solve many of Cameroon's problems. In March 2008, following the February 2008 riots, Platform USA Branch wrote a letter to Cameroonian Parliamentarians urging them to consult with their constituents before passing the constitutional reform bill to preserve the peace. They also demarched President Biya, through a Memorandum presented to Cameroon's ambassador in Washington.

I. The GRC does not dedicate resources to the Cameroonian diaspora. During a forum of the Cameroonian Diaspora held in France in July, 2008 called "DAVOC" (Draw a Vision of Cameroon), the government representative announced the future creation of a High Commission or a High Authority of the diaspora that would liaise between Cameroonians living abroad and the government. The General Manager of the National Employment Fund (FNE), a government agency, also announced the creation in 2010 of an Agency for Migration Fluxes that would allow the government and citizens from the diaspora to work together to finance projects and attract investment.

J. Ambassador Garvey and former Ambassador Marquardt have occasionally addressed groups of Cameroonian diaspora leaders when in the United States. For example, Post organized a diaspora meeting in Washington in 2006 in which Ambassador Marquardt addressed the Cameroonian community. Topics included returning talent to Cameroon, bringing more investment, being involved in the political evolution of the country, and involving women in diaspora affairs. Ambassador Garvey will also address a group of Cameroonians on October 8, 2009 when in Washington for the AF Chiefs of Mission conference.

K. Most requests received are related to business inquiries. Many Cameroonians in the U.S. are seeking investment and trade

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opportunities with Cameroon. Post responds to them in the same manner as it responds to every request for assistance by American businesses.

L. Post has not created customized public diplomacy programs for the diaspora community, other than the events listed in section J.

M. A most useful tool for post would be a database of Cameroonian organizations in the U.S., including a description of activities and the major figures associated with the organization.

PETERSON